

FINAL

**PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLIST ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY JANUARY 5, 2021
REMOTE MEETING – MICROSOFT TEAMS (CALL-IN ONLY)
7:00 PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Colin Smith (Chair); Erling Heistad (City Council); Alan Schnur; Marie McCormick; Alex Belensz; John Kelleher (Vice-Chair); Clifton Below (Alt)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sarah Crysl Akhtar

STAFF PRESENT: Rebecca Owens (Associate Planner); Paul Coats (Director, Recreation & Parks)

1) CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Smith called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

A. Review of meeting procedures and NH RSA 91-A “Right-to-Know” requirements
Ms. Owens reviewed the executive order requiring public audio and video access and options for participation. A Roll Call of Board Members who participated remotely is listed above. Mr. Below was appointed to serve as a regular member in place of Ms. Akhtar.

B. Election of Officers
Chair Smith turned the meeting over to Ms. Owens.

Ms. Owens called for nominations, including self-nominations, for the position of committee Chairperson. One nomination was received for Mr. Smith, who accepted it. Mr. Kelleher MOVED to elect Colin Smith as Chairperson for the Lebanon Pedestrian and Bicyclist Advisory Committee. The MOTION was seconded by Mr. Below.

**** The vote on the MOTION passed (6-0-1), with one abstention.***

Ms. Owens called for nominations, including self-nominations, for the position of committee Vice-Chairperson. One nomination was received for Mr. Kelleher, who declined it. Mr. Schnur nominated Ms. McCormick. Ms. McCormick accepted the nomination and Mr. Schnur MOVED to elect Ms. McCormick as Vice Chairperson for the Lebanon Pedestrian and Bicyclist Advisory Committee. The MOTION was seconded by Mr. Heisted. Chair Smith thanked Mr. Kelleher for his assistance as the Vice Chairperson over the years.

**** The Vote on the MOTION passed (6-0-1), with one abstention.***

C. Review of 2021 Meeting Calendar

Committee members requested changes in dates and times for September, November, and March.

2) APPROVAL OF MINUTES: December 1, 2020

Amendments: Mr. Below recommended corrections on page 2, to change “second” to “sixth” on line 26, to delete “in the CIP” on line 33, and to insert “signs” after “25 mph” on line 36.

Mr. Heistad *MOVED to approve the minutes as amended.*
Seconded by Ms. McCormick.

Roll Call Vote: Members voting in favor included Chair Smith, Mr. Belensz, Ms. McCormick, Mr. Schnur, Mr. Kelleher, Mr. Heisted, and Mr. Below.

****The vote on the MOTION was unanimously approved (7-0).***

Minutes approved with amendment.

3) OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:

4) STUDY ITEMS:

D. Updates from Other Boards

- Planning Office - Planning Staff

No updates on new projects.

- Safe Routes to School - Planning Staff/Police Staff

Ms. Owens shared the current conceptual design from Public Works for a project to complete sidewalk on the east side of Moulton Avenue, in front of Lebanon Middle School, and connect it to a new crossing over Dartmouth College Highway, and from there to connect users to a new gravel path behind the Public Works building. The focus of the discussion was on the crosswalk design, which would include rapid flashing beacons, signage, tip-downs and pavement markings.

A key concern and recommendation for engineering is to consider the lack of visibility for vehicles in the right-straight lane going west on Route 4 if there are any vehicles stacked in the left-turn lane from Route 4 to Moulton; the stacking blocks visibility for noting anyone in the crosswalk and MUTCD has guidance on how to mark pavement for an advanced yield or advisory stop.

Committee members also agreed that if possible, based on grading, it would be a shorter crossing distance and safer to move the crosswalk farther west, to be more aligned with the end of the Moulton sidewalk and Public Works driveway. Mr. Belensz said that a similar strategy to consider, to shorten the crossing distance, support traffic calming and improve the visibility of those approaching the crossing would be bump-outs, as there is not a lot of heavy truck traffic making turns onto Moulton.

Mr. Below noted that the current streetlight pole and light replacement plan only requires one light and that should be reflected on updated plans; he indicated that Everett Hammond has the current lighting plans. Mr. Schnur asked if the City has plans for the widening of bike shoulders/lanes on Prospect Street Extension and Hillcrest Drive and Mr. Below suggested that the Committee could review the project's striping plan.

- City Council – Erling Heistad

Mr. Heistad reported that City Council finalized the budget. Mr. Below added that in addition to approving, though not without debate, funding for the multimodal plan, City Council approved extending path improvements from Spencer Street to the Tunnel, and paving the Northern Rail Trail from Spencer Street to Bank Street Extension, with the bulk of such funds not consisting of tax dollars but revenue from 20 Spencer Street.

- Planning Board/CIP – VACANT

Ms. Owens confirmed that funding for the multimodal plan had been approved as part of the Planning and Development Department's operations budget and that the Committee would be involved with development of a scope of work for the project, later in 2021.

- Police Reports - Alan Schnur

Mr. Schnur reported that while the accident report for November shows zero collisions, there seems to be a discrepancy between the City Manager's Report and the Police database; he is waiting for the December data to see if that helps to explain the difference, or suggested a records request could be submitted for collisions in 2020. The November collision in the Police database involved a cyclist, which breaks the trend of no bicycle-related reports in recent years. 2020 had more collisions (7) than 2019 (6). He has not received updated data or clarifications from Lebanon Fire Department.

- Mascoma River Greenway Coalition - Colin Smith

Mr. Coats indicated that his department is still committed to maintaining the Greenway as an all-season path, and that they are beginning to plan for the Mall Tunnel re-opening. He supports coordination across departments and committees, such as between Ped-Bike and Arts & Culture, to maximize the opening event as a multi-pronged opportunity to share the day to showcase and celebrate the Tunnel, 25th anniversary of the Northern Rail Trail, and community safety per the annual Bike Rodeo. The logistics of doing so with virus concerns are important and cross-marketing could boost overall participation and engagement. Mr. Heisted asked Mr. Coats about traffic involving the rail trails and Mr. Coats deferred to Mr. Belensz. Mr. Coats reported that the City installed two traffic counters, including at the APD trail access and Miracle Mile access, in partnership with the Upper Valley Trails Alliance but that we cannot distinguish between user modes. The counts can be compared to those from the 2020 Greenway survey and the data can be used to help influence grants and budgets.

Mr. Coats provided an overview of a proposal that will be brought to the Cemetery Board of Trustees for formal review at their January meeting. The proposal scope included formalization of a walk-bike route through the Sacred Heart Cemetery, from Old Pine Tree Cemetery Road, in order to provide access to the Greenway. At present, there is some unsanctioned use of the cemetery as a pass-through and the intent of the path would be to encourage use of a single route. The route is popular with the local population as a means of accessing the Greenway, a safe off-road transportation corridor, and the vast trail network of the Nature Trail/Landmark Trails/Boston Lot. There are no other public access points on the adjacent section of Greenway, for one seeking to access the Greenway from the west; they would have to go to the Glen Road terminus or go to the Slayton Hill lot. Mr. Coats acknowledged that preliminary review by the Cemetery Board involved a lot of concerns, many of which object to such a path as relates to it not being an official use under the cemetery bylaws and to bicycles not being permitted in Lebanon cemeteries. Other routes had been considered including State right-of-way on between I89 and the cemetery but that the last time the City inquired, an easement had been denied. The Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association (UVMBA) started a petition that gathered over 250 signatures, including about 90 Lebanon residents, in support of the proposal. Mr. Coats noted that one way to frame the proposal would be for the path to undergo a trial implementation and review period.

Committee members engaged in substantial discussion of the proposal, some of which is reflected herein. Mr. Schnur commented that under state law, bicycles and vehicles follow the same roadway rules so that it would make sense to allow bicycles in cemeteries and that he believes the bylaws may be outdated. Mr. Smith commented that he knows residents who regularly visit cemeteries by bicycles and asked if there had been any violations reported in

other Lebanon cemeteries concerning damage from those walking through them but not on official business. Mr. Below stated that the proposal is consistent with the City's Complete Streets Policy, in terms of supporting all user types on City facilities; he recalled that in the early days of the rail trail, there had been fear of crime and bad behavior but that that has largely been unsubstantiated and that "eyes on the street" principles, that make travel areas more visible to the public, support prevention of issues. He surmised that if there is not a structured path, people will continue to create unstructured access, and also commented that people can walk their bikes through the cemetery. Mr. Belensz echoed support for points made by Committee members and said he believes there is a strong desire for people to get from the road to the Greenway in that section, including as evidenced by unsanctioned use of the State right-of-way as a route as well. He supports formalizing an access as the "least harmful option" in lieu of fencing the whole cemetery to prevent any access to the Greenway. Mr. Belensz recognized concerns voiced about parking in the cemetery and suggested that Greenway parking needs can be directed to the Mall Tunnel, Slayton Hill, APD, and Boston Lot accesses.

Several members of the public identified themselves to join discussion about the project, including Clayton Morlock (of UVMBA), Billy Saine (Lebanon resident and former Public Works employee), and Douglas Boisvert (Lebanon resident). Mr. Saine said that he has actively supported the City's rail trails in the past but that he is not in support of the proposal. He took issue with people potentially using the cemetery for parking to access the Greenway and did not think that parking signage to point Greenway users to the Nature Trail parking area on the opposite side of the road would prevent such. He does not believe that signage would be enforced and said that he has observed cemetery damage from erosion associated with bike usage. Mr. Saine further noted dislike of allowing out of state users who want to access the Greenway to pass through the cemetery.

Mr. Morlock's comments included that a positive aspect of the proposal would be to enable great accessibility to the cemetery and appreciation of it for members of the public. He noted that there is ample parking available at the Nature Trail parking area and the UVMBA has budget capacity to support new parking signage to direct Greenway users to that parking.

Committee members briefly discussed a trail access at Storrs Hill, to the Al Merrill Trail, that is via Glenwood Cemetery. There was also discussion of whether Greenway users will continue to try to access it from the Renihan Meadows private residential property if they cannot go through the cemetery.

Mr. Coats repeated that concerns stated are valid but that he still submits that such concerns can be addressed, including parking and adherence to a proper path. He noted that he would ask for the Board's permission to pursue the project and that he would not ask for project funding assistance. They do not have a cost estimate yet but he expects it would be supported in large part by volunteers. Ms. Owens cited cemeteries that are successful multi-use models, such as Mt. Auburn Cemetery. Mr. Kelleher suggested that a good balance for a motion would show the Committee's general consensus supporting the proposal, as just saying "no" is not a great solution, but to promote it as a pilot project.

There was a Motion by Mr. Kelleher that the Lebanon Pedestrian and Bicyclist Advisory Committee is in favor of the proposed project to formalize a bicycle path through Sacred Heart/Valley Cemetery connecting Mascoma Street to the Mascoma River Greenway. In recognition of concerns about the cemetery property, the Committee recommends that the Board of Cemetery Trustees considers a pilot implementation period, upon which the project can be reviewed, and that there is coordination among those administering the path for appropriate facilities, including signage as relates to parking and path usage.

Seconded by Mr. Belenz.

Roll Call Vote: Members voting in favor included Ms. McCormick, Mr. Heisted, Mr. Kelleher, Mr. Schnur, Mr. Belenz, and Mr. Smith. Mr. Below abstained.

***The vote on the MOTION was approved (6-0-1).**

- State of NH Updates - Alex Belenz
No updates.

- Class VI Roads – Colin Smith
No updates.

- Rails to Trails - VACANT
No updates.

- Communications - Ms. McCormick
No updates.

B. Review of 2021 Master Plan Outcomes, Priorities

Ms. Owens provided a brief overview of potential priority themes for 2021 but noted that the discussion should be continued more in depth in February. Current notable projects and themes include NHDOT/Public Works/UVLSRPC project coordination, including road resurfacing, CSO, Special Assessment District and Route 120/Exit 18 projects, as well as the Tunnel re-opening and road striping for shoulders and sharrows.

A Motion by Mr. Heisted to extend the meeting by 15 minutes.

Seconded by Mr. Belenz.

Roll Call Vote: Members voting in favor included Ms. McCormick, Mr. Below, Mr. Heisted, Mr. Kelleher, Mr. Schnur, Mr. Belenz, and Chair Smith.

***The vote on the MOTION was unanimously approved (7-0).**

The meeting was extended at 9:15 PM.

5) OTHER BUSINESS:

Chet Clem introduced himself as a member of the public, president of Lyme Properties, and representative on the West Lebanon Revitalization Advisory Committee (WLRAC). He offered to serve as a liaison to the Ped-Bike committee, sharing that one of his priorities is connectivity in Lebanon. Chair Smith informed Mr. Clem that one of the Committee's long-standing interests is to extend the Greenway to White River Junction and that members discussed this with West Lebanon residents in 2019, who are similarly interested. Mr. Belenz highlighted that improving sidewalks in West Lebanon Village, to facilitate more public spaces, and reconsidering the railroad bridge over the Connecticut River for pedestrian access would be good topics for the WLRAC, understanding that the former is currently under study and that there was a past study on the latter. Mr. Clem responded that one of his development goals for River Park is to help redirect some transit traffic and parking from Kilton Library to River Park. He said that the WLRAC will meet twice a month until it sunsets by 2022, culminating in a set of recommendations to City Council.

Ms. Owens alerted the Committee that this would be the last meeting for Alex Belensz as a member. Mr. Belensz is moving out of town and noted that he is still interested in supporting the Committee, particularly via his professional role with the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission. Committee members shared thanks for Mr. Belensz's substantial contributions in 2020.

6) FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS & FOLLOW-UP NEEDS:

- LebNews – January communication
- Special Assessment District project update (Ms. Owens)
- Fill open Ped-Bike regular member position
- Review of Bike Friendly Community designation, due in 2021 (working group)
- Development Regulations Review Update (Ms. Owens)
- Review with Public Works messaging and signage for sharrows (Ms. Owens)
- Resurfacing Opportunities and Policy for City Council consideration (Ms. Owens)
- Compare bike storage provisions in Planning Board applications to draft regulations
- Get clarifications on LFD EMS data (Mr. Schnur)
- Review the Committee's webpages for updates (working group)
- Explore a central document repository for the Committee (Ms. Owens)

7) ADJOURNMENT:

A Motion by Chair Smith to adjourn the meeting.

Seconded by Mr. Heisted.

Roll Call Vote: Members voting in favor included Ms. McCormick, Mr. Below, Mr. Heisted, Mr. Kelleher, Mr. Belensz, Mr. Schnur, and Chair Smith.

****The vote on the MOTION was unanimously approved (7-0).***

The meeting was adjourned at 9:31 PM.

Prepared by Rebecca Owens, Planning Staff